

# Amanda Doerr Transcript

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**Matt 00:00:26** To thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape, brands must move at an ever-increasing pace. I'm Matt Britton, founder and CEO of Suzy. Join me and key industry leaders as we dive deep into the shifting consumer trends within their industry, why it matters now, and how you can keep up. Welcome to The Speed of Culture.

Welcome back to The Speed of Culture podcast. We are here live at a beautiful new Amazon warehouse here on Cyber Monday, one of the biggest shopping days of the year. And we're thrilled to be joined by Amanda Doerr, the Vice President of Core Shopping at Amazon, a brand now synonymous with Cyber Monday and Black Friday shopping. This season, Amanda and her team are taking a big leap with Rufus, Amazon's AI shopping assistant, helping everyone from power deal hunters to grandma buying holiday gifts, to find the right products faster and to shop with confidence. Amanda, thank you so much for joining today.

**Amanda 00:01:16** Oh, gosh. Thank you for having me. I'm really excited to be here. Thanks for coming out to Robbinsville.

**Matt 00:01:21** You know, I have to say, it's just fascinating to me that you can be on a highway driving by, and you see this warehouse in the distance. I have no idea of the incredible world that you actually see inside one of these warehouses. What actually happens here at these warehouses? Like, what gets done?

**Amanda 00:01:35** I mean, it's all pretty amazing. I've been with Amazon almost 15 years, and the amount of innovation we've seen and just how we do this work is pretty incredible when you come back to it. So this is where all of our inventory comes. So, you know, we forecast what we think customers are gonna need over the holiday season. We place those orders, and our selling partners send in inventory, and then they come into the fulfillment center. Our associates, with help from a lot of great robots, can stow that inventory. And then you get on your Amazon app or your desktop computer, order something, that order drops here, and then it's sent out to be picked, packed, and then sent off on its way through a lot of conveyance and a lot of magic and a lot of really hardworking elves here in the fulfillment center.

**Matt 00:02:19** So how different is a warehouse today than it was when you joined Amazon 15 years ago?

**Amanda 00:02:25** The scale of Amazon has obviously grown.

**Matt 00:02:27** I see. Right.

**Amanda 00:02:28** Like, incredibly. Right? There's a lot more automation than we used to have. We used to have the racks of folks, and folks would go with a cart and pick, and we would track how many steps people would get in a day. And if you were a picker on the floor, it was always known that that was the weight loss plan because you would get so much exercise in as you made your way across these huge floors. And, obviously, today, we have Kivas to help our folks out so that they don't have to get those kind of stress injuries or do that sort of hard labor of walking up and down the aisle, and it's just become a lot more automated and a lot smoother. And it's really exciting to see how much we can delight customers, how much faster we can get stuff out to customers.

**Matt 00:03:11** Absolutely. Now, of course, not only has the way you fulfill products have changed, but the way that your customer finds products and buys has changed dramatically. Yeah. Especially here in 2025 with the advances we've seen in AI and how accessible it is to the consumer. I mentioned during the intro Rufus, which is your AI shopping tool, and I'm sure you'll explain it way better than me. But talk to me first before you even get into Amazon. Like, how do you think AI is going to continue to change the consumer journey and the way that consumers buy products?

**Amanda 00:03:39** Yeah. I think that I'm really excited about AI because I see it as another really amazing tool in our toolkit to help solve, like, durable customer problems. I don't know that the problems that customers face, the friction they face in shopping is all that different, but we have new tools and new ways to help them find, explore, evaluate, and then obviously purchase items. And so I'm really excited to have AI help us get that hyper personal, hyper specific to you, in the moment recommendation that's really gonna delight you or the person you're giving a gift to. Then AI enables us to do that in ways that we haven't been able to do before at scale. So I'm really excited about how it's going to help us continue to solve these problems. My team owns the reviews, Amazon reviews. And one of our first forays into leveraging AI in the store was the Reviews Highlights feature, where we took these models and we summarized that corpus of review information that's so rich and robust, but, man, you can get down a rabbit hole. Right? So I was really excited to see that get launched, and the team put that out there for customers to really help you kind of evaluate, make things more efficient, remove that friction, help you really understand what other customers are saying about product you're putting in there. Right?

**Matt 00:04:56** And something that doesn't really drive a change in the existing behavior. Right? So it's like sometimes the technology gets in the way of the customer experience because they have to learn something new. Here, they're looking at reviews, but instead of

having to look at 25, you're just looking at a summarization of one or two, and you're getting what you need to know.

**Amanda 00:05:14** Yeah. And you can find those review aspects. Right? So, does it do well on waterproof? Does it do well on durability? Does it do well on, do customers think it's a good value for money? And then you can click down into those aspects and start to drill down in different ways into that information to explore the information that you need for that moment, for the things that you care about. And with Rufus, our AI assistant, you can even get more personalized information for you about that product. And so I think we've always had this ambition to tailor that store, to tailor the Amazon store to what you need, what you're looking for for that moment in time. And AI is just a whole new amazing tool to be able to do that in real time for you.

**Matt 00:05:52** To drive hyper-personalization, understand what you know before you need, you know that you need it.

**Amanda 00:05:56** Yeah. And so maybe you found a recommendation for a sleeping bag someplace, but Amazon knows that you're getting it shipped to Washington State or to Upstate New York. And it's gonna say, you know, you might actually want something that's a little heavier weight than this one that you thought you might want and help you find and make that unregretted purchase so that you really get the product you need for the job you want that product to do.

**Matt 00:06:16** Yep. One of the most popular AI applications is, of course, chat. And people are chatting with large language models all the time now and using it for all different things from planning travel to mental health issues to research, you name it. When you think about maybe higher up in the consumer journey, high up in the funnel? Do you see consumers going to Rufus and trying to figure out, like, ingredients or things that they should pack for a trip? Or, and are you seeing that already? Is that the vision moving forward?

**Amanda 00:06:43** Yeah. You know, what we see with Rufus is we see people have these multi-turn conversations, right, where they're going back and forth. They're tweaking. They're editing. And we also see, even with Rufus and Alexa Plus, that folks are having more of these, what we call, upper funnel conversations, that might not even start with the goal of shopping or the goal of buying something, but might just be a lay of the land. So a while ago, I wanted to get my husband a turntable for as a present.

**Matt 00:07:07** Right? Cool, cool guy.

**Amanda 00:07:08** Yeah. And it was like, you know, I think you'd enjoy this. I know nothing about turntables. Right? This is not my thing. Normally, I'd go talk to my friend, Vaughn, and be like, "Vaughn, tell me about turntables." But, no, I was able to ask Rufus to kinda give me a lay of

the land. I was able to give it kind of a price point. I was able to describe, like, what I thought he would want to do with it. And it really helped me kind of, one, understand what the different options were that were available more generally and then really narrow down into that product when I was ready to do so. And so I think that these tools are just really amazing to help you do that. So not only when you know exactly what you wanna buy, but when you're really just thinking about what do I wanna buy a person.

**Matt 00:07:47** Yeah. Many people are surprised to hear that over two-thirds of shopping in e-commerce is actually on mobile devices. Yes. And that's I mean, for a while, people couldn't comprehend that you're actually gonna buy things on a little expensive of things over your mobile device. Now it's more commonplace. How has that adoption of m-commerce changed the way that you look at your product development and the overall consumer experience?

**Amanda 00:08:09** I think we've been mobile-first for a while at Amazon, where we really think about that growing mobile experience as the thing that we're really thinking about spending our time on. But we also recognize that there's a good segment of the population that still wants to have that more thorough evaluation experience. And I think with mobile, you're operating in a really constrained space. Right? And so you have to do more with less. You have to have the right tools in the right places at the right time, more so than you do when you're operating, like, on a full web browser screen. And so being frugal with that space, making sure that you're making the most of it, AI is a great tool for that as well because it can help bring the right information up at the right time to the customer and let them engage in the way that they want to to find out what they wanna know about the product and get comfortable with that purchase.

**Matt 00:08:59** Yeah. I would also imagine voice as an application. Obviously, you have Alexa as part of your portfolio. Now you have Rufus, so you have all these individually named technologies. And, obviously, the ability to interact with technology like you would another person is an ultimate unlock of AI. So do you see voice-based shopping becoming more and more? Because, obviously, Alexa tried, and it was very early. And now over time, it's finally catching up, and now it's so accurate. And more and more consumers, I think, are leaning into voice.

**Amanda 00:09:27** Yeah. I think, you know, I have Alexa Plus in my home, and it really is a game-changer. I know before, you kinda had to learn Alexa ease. Right? You had to learn how to get her to do what you wanted to do, and that was an unlock when she launched to just even be able to do that ambiently. But the level of change when you can have that natural language back and forth is just it's really powerful, and it does make shopping so much more intuitive. And even on our new larger screened Alexa devices, like, out of the 15-inch and the 21-inch—

**Matt 00:09:59** I got them all. Right? You got them all.

**Amanda 00:10:01** Okay. You know what I'm talking about. But you can have those sort of search conversations, and it can be both a visual and a vocal experience. And so the other day, I was asking it to help me find a skirt, I think. And it was like, "No. No. Like this one, but in white." And you would be able to have that with a shop assistant, but you'd never be able to do that really with what we've had before.

**Matt 00:10:22** Right.

**Amanda 00:10:23** And so, really, to watch customers change the way that they're behaving as they figure out that they can have these conversations like they would their best shopping assistant at the store that they frequent down the road. It's really interesting to see how rapidly that's changed how customers interact with those devices. Yeah.

**Matt 00:10:39** For sure. I mean, I think consumer psyche is interesting because sometimes consumers will try something when maybe a technology is not ready for prime time, and they'll write it off. Yeah. And I think for multiple voice applications, that could be the case. And I also think it's the case with AI where people may have tried to make images or videos using AI, say, in 2023, and it didn't work. But I often say that's just like saying you're not gonna stream online because you tried to stream in 2001, and it was choppy. Like, the technology is moving so fast. That you need to lean in and see where its capabilities lie today.

**Amanda 00:11:10** Yeah. Exactly. And I think that, you know, that's one of the challenges for our engineering teams too is that the technology is evolving so quickly and customer expectations are rising just as quickly. So when we first launched Review Highlights, it was cutting-edge for what it was at the time. And in the normal kind of development cycle, you wouldn't have to expect to refresh something so quickly. But six months later, we were like, "We need to go find a new model. We need to make sure that this is keeping up." And that rapid development cycle is so, so interesting to watch and interesting to adapt to within the engineering community.

**Matt 00:11:44** Absolutely.

**Amanda 00:11:45** It's been really, it's been a fun challenge, but definitely one you're keeping up not only with new features, but making sure that the features that you've built on AI keep up with customer expectations.

**Matt 00:11:54** We'll be right back with The Speed of Culture after a few words from our sponsors.

I think a good strategy in building product in today's day and age is get on the rails of AI innovations, doubling in power and potency every seven months. And if you're not on those rails, essentially your product gets worse as the frontier models get better. Where if you're on

the rails, it just continues to improve. And I think voice and a lot of the, frankly, the applications we've been talking about around Rufus definitely fall into that category.

**Amanda 00:12:20** Yeah. Absolutely. And I think you'll see that with Rufus over time. It's improved so much. And the recent additions of a lot more personalization and memory and its ability to retrieve those memories and that information about you as a shopper to really hone in on that personal recommendation for you, it just gets more and more powerful.

**Matt 00:12:38** It's all about data. Right? And that's what's going on system.

**Amanda 00:12:39** Yeah. And it gets smarter as, you know, you start to help it understand that. I have three kids, and it started to understand, you know, who the three kids are and what their personalities are, what they like, what they don't like, what I shop for them, what I'm shopping for me. And it just becomes a more and more useful tool every time I watch with it.

**Matt 00:12:54** So you obviously are in a fascinating role here at Amazon, and I can tell just by talking to you and my interactions that you probably don't sleep a lot during times of the year like this, and there's so much going on. What do you do to keep your finger on the pulse of your consumer and the technological innovation that we've seen, especially over the last couple years, to make sure that you're leading your business in the right direction?

**Amanda 00:13:18** Yeah. I mean, I think it's just really important to stay so plugged into the industry. It's been such a time of rapid growth. It's just uncanny how much more time I spend reading about what's coming next, what others are doing, what's getting launched than I did probably in the previous years where you stay really connected to customers, but the underlying technology hadn't changed as much. And so now it's really about making sure that you really understand what you can unlock. And so podcasts, news articles, we have a Slack channel within my team where people are talking about how am I using AI, how am I seeing it used, what's working, what's not, what do I need, just so those teams have those that ongoing dialogue. So it's both what's going on externally, but also how are our employees thinking about it and using it internally in their day-to-day lives as much as in their professional lives. And so, I actually, some of my favorite things are to listen to what my team members are doing with AI that's totally unrelated to work because they are our customers too. And so when you hear that, you can get inspiration for the problems they're trying to solve.

**Matt 00:14:23** It's so interesting you say that because I do a lot of training with big companies around AI. And what I learned is often when people work at large organizations, their hands are tied in terms of their ability to use AI. They can't just use any model they want. They can't just upload customer data. There's so many privacy and data security and legal concerns. But if you're at home and you wanna build a family chatbot or a personal health bot or something—

**Amanda 00:14:45** Yeah.

**Matt 00:14:46** You're unencumbered. And by going through the steps personally—

**Amanda 00:14:49** Yeah.

**Matt 00:14:50** You can really future-proof yourself that when the workplace catches up, you're gonna be differentiated moving forward.

**Amanda 00:14:55** Yeah. And I think that it just helps you figure out how to solve those problems differently, where and when to bring it in, how to think about it, like, where it's good right now, where it's not as good right now, where you're gonna have to help it more. And I also just think that it will tell you what your customers, for whatever your business is, are doing, what problems they're trying to solve, where they're hitting hiccups, not just with using it to build tools, but also just whether or not you can pause your mail when you go on vacation. All of these bits and pieces.

**Matt 00:15:23** So one data point I heard earlier today when I was here at your facility is that 60% of all commerce is through small businesses that sell over Amazon. I would have to believe some of these new innovations also help small businesses more easily get their products listed and sold and optimize product imagery and all of those things.

**Amanda 00:15:42** Yeah. I mean, it's been a great tool, and our selling partner services team has been investing a ton in making sure that we're making that tooling available for our 3P sellers to make their businesses successful. So they have everything from chatbot, that's an assistant that will help folks answer common questions about what's going on with their products in the store, sales and whatnot. And then they're working on generative AI imagery that we can help our selling partners, you know, make sure that they get great imagery. We know great imagery sells products, and so how can we get that up there for them? How can we help them tune and optimize their listings, lean into things that we know work? We have a lot of that data that we can share with them about what works and what doesn't when you're merchandising, and they can bring their own unique brand expression to that. And so it's really great to see how that can help them grow their businesses.

**Matt 00:16:27** Yeah. So heading into 2026, and I can't believe we're saying that. It always flies by so fast. Right?

**Amanda 00:16:31** December today.

**Matt 00:16:32** I know.

**Amanda 00:16:32** Believe it. I saw the date, and that was like, "Oh, okay. Yeah."

**Matt 00:16:36** What are some new consumer habits or trends that you have your eye on? I mean, there's been a lot of talk about the emergence of live shopping, which obviously took off in China and now is growing here. Obviously, creators and influencers continue to drive mindshare and ultimately consideration of products. Are you thinking about those areas? Are there any others that you're really thinking about leaning into moving forward?

**Amanda 00:16:58** Yeah. I think a lot of what we're thinking about leaning into is how do we bring that inspiration to customers that again is like that hyper-personalized inspiration to them. And so we have a feature that we launched called AI Interests, and that's where you can go and type in natural language, things that you're interested in. So I have a kid who's interested in competitive yo-yoing. It's a thing. And he is super into competition grade yo-yos. And so I typed that into AI Interests. I said, "Here's the price range that he typically looks in, all the specifics about his hobby and where he's at in his development." And now I have this running list on Amazon that can bring forward new things to the store. So when his favorite professional yo-yo from Singapore drops a new yo-yo line, that shows up on my Amazon list, and I can discover those things that are very specific and very pertinent to me. And I do think that customers are gonna expect more and more of that. I think the other thing that I find really interesting with AI and especially ChatGPT and some of these bigger models is customers are willing to share a lot of information if you're going to use it well and help them solve the problem that they're wanting to solve. And so we used to try to infer a lot of information about what are you looking for? Maybe you're doing this. Maybe you're at this stage, maybe you're at that stage, but now we can just say, "Hey, I think you might be looking for this. Is this what you're looking for?" Or, "Tell me a little bit more about this and I can help you find a better product for your needs." And customers, you know, if you do use it and you use it well and you respect privacy and do all of those things that we already do well at Amazon, you're gonna wind up getting a lot of great information rather than trying to infer that out of customers. And it's gonna be that direct relationship, that very conversational piece that makes it feel better than just clicking a like or a heart or a downvote or whatnot.

**Matt 00:18:48** I love that. I couldn't agree more. I think hyper-personalization, we've talked about for so long in the marketing advertising world, but now it's truly here.

**Amanda 00:18:55** It's true. And then, like, when you bring in imagery with it too, I can even have imagery that really speaks to me and to my habits, lifestyles, hobbies, maybe selling the same product, but that might speak specifically to me. So I'm really excited to see where the generative imagery goes as well. It's gonna be very cool.

**Matt 00:19:13** So, shifting gears here as we wrap up. As we mentioned at the onset, you've been at Amazon for 15 years and obviously have done a great job at building your own personal brand, obviously driving great business results for Amazon. When you look back at your career at Amazon, even prior, what are some decisions that you think you made right along the way to really position yourself for continued professional growth?



**Amanda 00:19:35** I'll actually tell you a little bit of where I think I got it a bit wrong and where I feel like I springboarded when I figured it out. I think that when I came out of college, I thought that all career was up and to the right, and it just had to be. Very linear. Right? Like, here I am, and this is what I'm gonna do next, and this is what's gonna do next. And I got to a place where I got married, I started having kids, and I was still trying to get it to go up into the right all the time, up into the right and take every opportunity that came right in front of me. Like, it was never gonna come again. And I burned out, to be very honest with you. Like, I burned myself out. And I think that when I realized that we're in this for the marathon, not the sprint, and that you can flatten out for a little bit and then take a gentle hill up, and it ebbs and flows and roll with it and let it roll with what you need in your life and let that be part of you as a whole person, not just somebody who's focused on that. I feel like that really unlocked for me that it was a two-way relationship between me and my career, not just something I had to go grind at, and that brought a lot more joy to it as well. And I think that when you have that and you have that right balance and you're not burnt out, like, it's great. And the opportunities do come along, and you need to be willing to lean into the ones you're excited about, but you can also be like, "This isn't the right moment." And I think that that sort of more balanced feel of career has really been something that's served me well, certainly, in probably the last 10 or 15 years.

**Matt 00:20:57** Yeah. For sure. Yeah. Fantastic. Well, our final question that we often ask our guests, is there a saying or mantra that helps kinda encapsulate their career journey? What comes to mind for you? They're all over the walls here. So—

**Amanda 00:21:09** Yeah. You know, I mean, I could throw out an Amazon one, but I think that it's one that actually does really resonate to me, and it's the middle part of this mantra. And it's, "work hard, have fun, make history." But that middle part, which people tend to gloss over, that have fun part. Right? Like, we're shipping software, and we're delighting customers, and we're getting stuff out the door, and there is a lot of urgency, but there's also a lot of time to enjoy the people that you're doing it with and to have fun and to bring levity and to not take it all too seriously to just make sure that you've got that right balance and light in the room because that's what makes it doable over the long run.

**Matt 00:21:44** So, for sure. Well, I certainly had a lot of fun interviewing you today. It's been a great interview, and thanks so much for taking time during your busy schedule here on Cyber Monday to share your wisdom and the great work Amazon's doing to continue to innovate with our audience.

**Amanda 00:21:56** Well, thanks for making time for us. We appreciate it.

**Matt 00:21:58** On behalf of Suzy and Adweek team, thanks again to Amanda Doerr, Vice President of Core Shopping at Amazon, for joining us today. Be sure to subscribe, rate, and

review The Speed of Culture podcast on your favorite podcast platform. Till next time, see you soon, everyone. Take care.

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